

RISHMA DUNLOP

Sleep

Think of the body's last years—the cage of pain it can be.
Fisted soft as felt in the gloam and hush of cabinet dust,
We're never free of history, the soured ghosts of blood

click and cuff the night, the city's howl coils in us, scrapes
the circuitry of seam-split love. Outside—the world is
guttled and stuffed, gust-tangled.

I fear the cold slab, but you believe the earth has a taste for us,
ridge of gum and bone splinter—you want our bodies there,
close, close—all things open here as you sleep, ears drummed

in your skull's kilter and sag, recall of molar grind in your mouth.
My dream strains to reach you, to lay itself along the length of us.
The body's tether is tenuous—a frail strip of hide.

This—our last stretch of cherried days, my love, and it burns me—
this flamed threnody under the skin, clear and muscular like the flow
of water, bearing us up to a new country, the sky taking us—lifting us

home to one more sleep. Think of it—what has been between
lovers—fire we didn't see coming. To ask for more is an impossible
proposal. I plead for nothing.